Map of Elam (shown above in highlighted area).

Susa, also known as Shushan, Susiana in French and Latin language, was one of the city-states of ancient Iran in, Elam which later became
the winter capital of the Achaemenian kings (c. 675 - 330 BCE). There is evidence that Susa has been continuously inhabited from 4,200 BCE placing it among the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. In addition, there are traces at Susa of a village inhabited around 7,000 BCE and painted pottery dating from ca. 5,000 BCE at the site.

The Susa historical site is located in the Susiana Plain that is irrigated by the Karkheh Kur (Choaspes), Ab-e Dez and Karun rivers, The Karkheh and Karun rivers form the western and eastern (together with the Zagros mountains) boundaries of the plain. Today, the site is surrounded by the modern-day Shush, a town in the south-west Iranian province of Khuzestan.

Darius I, the Great, was the tenth king of the Achaemenian dynasty (c700-330 BCE), which had early in its history, established two royal lines that stemmed from the second king, Chispish's (Teispes') two son's, Kurush I (Cyrus I - not to be confused with Cyrus the Great) and Arshama (Arsames). Kurush (Cyrus) I established the first line that ended with Kurush (Cyrus) II with his murder by Bardia (Smerdis) the usurper. Darius, son of Vishtasp, governor of Iran, and grandson of Arshama (Arsames) who established the second line, reclaimed the Imperial Iranian throne for the Achaemenians.
Darius' ascension to the throne an account preserved in the stone inscribed at Behistun (presently in Iran's Kermanshah province)

In Book 3 of his *Histories* (3.61), Herodotus gives us a far more dramatic account of the circumstances leading up to Darius assuming the Iranian throne.

In both accounts, Darius killed (with the help of six co-conspirators) Gaumata, a Magian who had usurped the Achaemenian throne.

Darius' troubles did not end with his ascension. His kingship was challenged and rebellions broke out throughout the kingdom. He had to fight nineteen battles "in one and the same year after I became king".

Once Darius had consolidated his rule, he set about expanding the Iranian empire established by Cyrus the Great, making it the largest empire the world had ever seen (Meyer, p. 85) to that point. In the process he ruled over about 50 million people. He was universally recognized, even by Greeks, as a great and just king who brought prosperity to the Iranian empire and its neighbours. The Greek poet Aeschylus called the reign of Darius as the golden age of Iran - an age characterized by the rule of law, a just law.
Shush or Susa is located on a fifteen-meter-high artificial raised 100-hectare terrace. It has suffered greatly in the past seventy years. The photographs below show the reckless spread of urbanization close to the main citadel and over unexcavated area immediately surrounding the mound. In addition, the site is being greatly harmed by illegal excavations, garbage dumping, a planned bus depot, and a hotel on unexcavated land. The surviving walls have been greatly eroded. To add to this tragedy, the site was also heavily damaged by Iraqi bombardment during the War.
Susa as an Achaemenian Capital

Susa became part of the Iranian (old Persian) empire under Cyrus II, the Great in 538 or 539 BCE. During the balance of Achaemenian period (to 330 BCE), Susa functioned as one of the rotating capitals (a winter capital) of the Achaemenian Kings.

Darius I, the Great, built an extensive palace complex (see image below) ca. 510 BCE, and Herodotus mentions Susa as being the capital of Darius' empire (Herodotus does not make any mention Persepolis being a Persian capital). The palace complex - whose building continued under Darius' son Xerxes - was destroyed by a fire during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465-424 BCE) and then restored fifty years later by his grandson, Artaxerxes II (404-358 BCE).
It is said that; Alexander of Macedonia captured Susa in December 330 BCE and plundered the city, seizing some 40,000 talents of gold and silver from the treasury.

& administrative complex at Susa
Source: Ridpath's History of the World by John Ridpath. 1901

Reconstruction of Darius' palace
Reconstruction of the Apadana (Audience Hall) at Susa
Note stone capitals at the top of the wooden columns

کاخ آپادانا بصورت بازسازی شده در شوش. سنگ‌های سرستون‌ها که تیرک‌هایا نگاه میداشتند، توجه کنید.
In Darius' inscription (Dsf) found in Susa's great hall, he notes: "The materials, ornamentation and artisans for this palace which I built at Susa have come from afar".

"For its foundations, the earth was dug until I reached rock. When the excavation was complete, foundation rock was packed down some 40 cubits to 20 cubits in depth. On that foundation the palace was constructed using sun-dried brick. These tasks were performed by Babylonians".

"The cedar timber was brought by the Assyrians to Babylon from a mountain in Lebanon. From Babylon, the Carians and Ionians brought it to Susa. The yaka-timber was brought from Kandahar (Gandara) and Kerman (Carmania)".

The image shows the remains of the palace in Susa, a city in modern-day Iran, where Darius the Great built his palace. The inscription on the palace highlights the use of materials and artisans from far away, emphasizing the grandeur and architectural significance of the structure.
"The gold was brought from Sardis and from Bakhtrish (Bactria) was wrought here. The precious stone lapis lazuli and carnelian which were crafted here was brought from Suguda (Sogdiana). The precious stone turquoise that was brought from Uvarazmish (Chorasmia) was crafted here. The silver and ebony were brought from Egypt. The ornamentation with which the wall was adorned was brought from Ionia. The ivory which was crafted here, was brought from Ethiopia, Sind and Harauvatish (Arachosia)".

"The stone columns which were crafted here, were brought from a village named Abiradu, in Elam. The stone-cutters who crafted the stone were Ionians and Sardians".

"The goldsmiths who crafted the gold were Medes and Egyptians. The men who crafted the wood were Sardians and Egyptians. The men who crafted the baked brick were Babylonians. The men who adorned the walls were Medes and Egyptians".

"The work Susa was one of excellence. Me may Ahuramazda protect me, Vistasp my father, and my country."

The palace complex occupied the northern terrace of Susa, and included the Apadana or audience hall and royal residence. The palace
complex occupied five hectares and were built on a artificially raised 12-hectare raised area. Access to the palace complex was on a pavement of bricks from the south through the Royal City. The pavement passed through a colossal, covered 24 m square passageway which had two halls and two porticoes each with two columns. Turning at a right angle, the road crossed a brick causeway and ended at the Gate of Darius.

1- تالار نخست
2- تالار دوم
3- تالار نظامی
4- تالار پادشاهی (تاج)
5- دروازه بزرگ
6- آپادانا
7- تاج (پادشاه)
8- درگاه باختری
Stone Capital that sits on top of the columns. A capital is the upper part of an architectural pillar or column that sits on top of the shaft and which supports the assembly that eventually supports the roof or overhang. At the Louvre, Paris. Photo credit.
Glazed / enamelled decorative brick frieze from the Apadana. Photo Credit: At Pavilion Sully at the Louvre museum, Paris, France
Frieze of griffon assembled from glazed / enamelled decorative brick from the Apadana.

Photo Credit: At Pavilion Sully at the Louvre museum, Paris, France

آرايش زينتي لعاب داده شده با سنگ آجر تزليني از کاخ آپادانا.

نگاره پاويون سالی در موزه لور پاريس فرانسه.
The immortals - Achaemenian elite soldiers.
Photo Credit: At Pavilion Sully at the Louvre museum, Paris, France
Frieze of sphinx assembled from glazed / enamelled decorative brick from the Apadana.

Photo Credit: At Pavilion Sully at the Louvre museum, Paris, France